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SILVER GILT WREATH  
PRESENTED TO  
DR. JOACHIM



DESIGNED AND  
EXECUTED BY  
MRS. P. H. NEWMAN

## DESIGNERS' JOTTINGS

THE Fourth Annual Dinner of the Society of Designers was held at the Restaurant Frascati, on Friday, May 19th, the anniversary of the inaugural dinner four years ago. An excellent dinner was followed by an enjoyable evening and a musical entertainment, evidently highly appreciated by those present. Among recent elections to the Society I note the names of James Braid, John J. Brownsword, H. Spencer Stromquist, and G. B. Sully.

In conversation the other day with a gentleman, under whose notice pass annually a very large proportion of the students who are 'going in for design,' I was told that the number of these to-day was *ten times* as great as it was five years ago. This multiplication cannot be entirely accounted for by the undeniable increase in the demand for articles in the manufacture of which applied art designs is a necessary factor. It must be largely ascribed to the depression in the sale of pictures and the resultant boom in design.

There must be some outlet contrived for the mass of talent and energy which is being discovered and set in motion by the schools already established and those springing up in every district, and I see even so great an authority on the subject as Sir William B. Richmond, R.A., advising students of a school of art that, as it was obvious they could not all become great painters, they should rather turn their attention in the direction of 'ornamental design.'

There is another aspect of the question. Cultured folk are beginning to get sick of so much ornamentation. This has already been seen in the wall-paper trade, and the 'cute manufacturer has set the fashion of plain papers for walls—coloured of course in 'art' shades—the only bit of pattern coming in the frieze, which has consequently, by the way, developed to—in some instances—somewhat alarming proportions. Pattern designers have for long preferred plain surfaces for their own use, but that, it may be supposed, is from similar causes to those which disincline clergymen to spend their leisure hours in reading sermons.

I forget who is the author of the dictum—very extensively used in that city—'What Manchester thinks to-day England will think to-morrow;' but I trust Man-

chester folk will not draw deductions if I plagiarise it by saying, 'What cultured people feel to-day the British public may eventually realise.' Dealers and shopkeepers are quick in catching a new idea from a customer with some reputation for taste, and always ready to crystalise such an idea in a form acceptable to the majority of their customers.

Then again, a person of any refinement will always feel a certain repugnance to the use of ornament merely as a means of disguising defects in construction or finish. A plain brass article, for instance, is always more expensive than a similar thing drowned in cheap ornamentation. 'Why?' says the every-day shopper, and it is explained that the former, being quite plain, requires a superior degree of finish. And so on, and so the public taste is formed.

A remarkable instance of over-ornamentation was the mansion built for the South African millionaire, Mr. Beit, in Park Lane, the whole frontage of which was smothered in relief work, not bad, by the way, for much of it the best of its kind. When the place passed into the hands of one of the Sassoons, that gentleman very wisely had most of the carving cut away, leaving only a few bits which fitted very well with the general design of the building, and which naturally gained enormously in effect from being surrounded with plain surface.

Not to spin this out to an undue length, the point of my argument is simply that, while designers and artists and persons of taste will understand very well the reasons for the removal of most of the ornament on the Park Lane house, or for the preference for a beautiful metal surface lightly decorated with ornament, or for a certain amount of repose on the walls or ceiling of a room, the unthinking public which blindly accepts a 'lead,' and follows it as the latest fashion, will *not* understand our reasons, and a revulsion of feeling against pattern may arise which will affect us very seriously who live by pattern.

I am able to give a block of the wreath presented by the Philharmonic Society to Joseph Joachim on the first of June, in commemoration of his first performance in London forty years ago. The wreath is silver gilt, and was designed and executed by Mrs. Philip H. Newman.

T.B.